

THE S.T.F.U. NEWS

April 27, 1939

ISSUED BY
SOUTHERN TENANT FARMERS UNION
Box 5215, Memphis, Tenn.

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CRAWFORDSVILLE SCENE OF PLANTATION VIOLENCE

S.T.F.U. Asks Justice Department For Thorough Investigation

Memphis, Tenn.---The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union has requested U. S. Attorney-General Frank R. Murphy to make an immediate and thorough investigation into the arrest of three union organizers, E. G. Creasey, L. H. Van Ryan and D. A. Griffin, in Crawfordsville, Arkansas on Saturday, April 15th, and the brutal beating of Creasey and Van Ryan at the hands of Town Marshall Robbins and his planter friends.

The three organizers were taken into custody by the Town Marshall just a few moments after they entered the town, and were taken to the office of Justice of the Peace, Mosby. All three men were cursed and threatened and Van Ryan was struck several times, once on the street at the time of the arrest and again in the office of the Justice of the Peace. After sending the other two men out of the room, Robbins and six or seven other men began beating Creasey. One man threw a heavy desk seal at him, striking and severely bruising his shoulder. Robbins struck him repeatedly with a black jack, and after he had fallen to the floor, the men continued to kick and beat him.

Planters Fear Investigation

After the beating the men were released and warned on pain of death not to return to Crawfordsville. They came immediately to Memphis where they made a report to the National Office. They stated that Creasey had received the beating because it had been discovered that he intended making a complaint for sharecroppers on a plantation near Crawfordsville who were being cheated out of their share of the government benefit payments. A scrap of paper with the name of the landowner and information about the cases was found in his pocket, and it was then that the planter mob which the Town Marshall had called together became violent. Although they have since tried to give other lying explanations, this is the real cause of the attack on Creasey. The planters know that now since sharecroppers and tenants have a union, they can no longer cheat them without paying for it.

As soon as Creasey had been treated by a doctor, plans were made to return to Crawfordsville on the following Saturday to hold a union meeting. This is proof of the bravery of these union men who care more for liberty than for their personal safety. They have dedicated their lives to the fight for economic justice and freedom for all workers and they will not stop working until it is won.

Return To Crawfordsville

On Saturday April 22nd, the men accompanied by President Butler and other members and friends of the Union returned to Crawfordsville. They stayed in the town for several hours, although they were informed that a planter mob was forming. The meeting was not held only because the owners of all available buildings in the town had been warned not to allow a meeting to be held, and they were afraid to open their doors. They only left after the many union members who were waiting to hear them that they would soon return.

The Department of Justice has full information of the events in Crawfordsville. Union members remember what happened to Paul D. Peacher when the Department of Justice took action against him at the demand of the Union. Freedom can only be secured when men demand that those rights and privileges guaranteed them as American citizens be upheld. Union members and the friends of the S.T.F.U. everywhere are making this demand. The Union has a right to hold meetings in Crawfordsville. A meeting will be held there, and those responsible for the attack on three organizers of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union will be brought to justice.

* DEMAND INVESTIGATION *

* READERS ARE URGED TO WRITE TO ATTORNEY-GENERAL *

* FRANK R. MURPHY, DEPT. OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, D.C. *

* AND DEMAND AN INVESTIGATION OF DENIAL OF CIVIL *

* RIGHTS IN CRAWFORDSVILLE. *

ARKANSAS ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN
STRENGTHENS UNION

Growth of Union Reported by Organizers
In Crittenden, Cross Counties

Memphis, Tenn.---At its last meeting the National Executive Committee authorized an intensive organizing campaign in Crittenden and Cross Counties. Most of the locals in those counties have been visited in the past two weeks by union organizers. Reports are that many old locals of the Union that have not been active since 1937 when the STFU affiliated with UCAPAWA have now begun to hold meetings and to pay dues since the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union is once more an independent organization. Locals, whose members and officers did not know the real truth of the difference between the two organization, are now returning to their own Union.

Many new locals are being organized, as well as new members signed up in all of the states where the Union is working.

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NEW CHARTERS READY

Each local has been sent an application blank for a new charter. These charters are now ready and are being mailed out to the locals as fast as the applications are received. The charters are on heavy paper, 12 by 20 inches in size and are suitable for framing. They will be sent to your local free. If your secretary has not sent the application in, see that it is mailed to the office in Memphis immediately. Any secretary who failed to get an application or who has lost it may get another by writing to the office. No charter will be sent a local until the application is received, properly filled out.

VISITORS FROM NEW YORK SPEAK AT
FORREST CITY MEETING

Morton Local Members Present
Sharecropper Play

Forrest City, Ark.---David L. Clendenin, National Secretary of the Workers Defense League with headquarters in New York City, Frank McCallister, Southern Secretary of the WDL from St Petersburg, Florida; and Miss Harriet Young, Secretary of the successful "National Sharecroppers' Week of 1939" held for the benefit of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, were guest speakers at a large meeting held at the ILGWU Hall in Forrest City on April 10th. J. F. Hynds, organizer for that section, arranged the meeting which was largely attended by union members of Forrest City and the surrounding community.

Mr. Clendenin spoke of the work being done by the Defense League on behalf of the workers of other sections of the country, as well as its work as the authorized defense agency of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. He pointed out that the Workers Defense League devotes itself entirely to the protection of labor's rights on all possible fronts.

D. A. Griffin and Flotine Hodge presented a play written by Mrs. Hodge which told the story of a sharecropper family who found that the only way they could improve their condition was by organizing with their fellow workers into the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. The cast was made up of union members from the Morton, Ark. Local.

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Southern Tenant Farmers' Union

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OKLAHOMA

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Office, Box 5215,
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OKLAHOMA STATE PRESIDENT PROTESTS REPEAL

OF LANDLORD TENANT RELATIONS LAW

Muskogee, Okla.--Henry Pippin, State President of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, today sent a letter to Governor Phillips at Oklahoma City, protesting against the repeal of the Landlord Tenant Relations Bureau by the state legislature. The act was adopted in 1937 and endorsed by the S.T.F.U. in Oklahoma. In his letter to the Governor, Mr. Pippin stated that the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union was beginning a real organizational campaign and by 1940 expected to have a majority of the 153,000 tenants in Oklahoma within its ranks.

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OKLAHOMA ORGANIZING DRIVE UNDERWAY

Reverend W. R. Purcells, State Secretary of the S.T.F.U., reported that all of the active locals in the state had been contacted by union organizers within the past two weeks. Many meetings have already been held, and a full schedule of speaking dates have been made for H. L. Mitchell, National Secretary from Memphis, Tenn., who is now in the field aiding in building the Union in Oklahoma.

Rev. Purcells announced that a new state organizer, Guy Thomas of Braggs, had been appointed, and that Henry Pippin and himself were ready at any time to serve the STFU Locals in Oklahoma. Guy Thomas was the leader of the WPA workers from from over in the Cookson Hills who last summer camped for several days in a "sit down" strike in the Muskogee WPA office.

W. N. McGoon, of near Bristow, has been commissioned as the County Organizer for Creek County. Brother McGoon is a tenant farmer, as are all of the other officers of the Oklahoma Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Politicians and city slickers are not allowed in the S.T.F.U.

NEWS OF LOCAL UNIONS

With the withdrawal of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union from the UCAFAWA, all of the old members who were opposed to the Union going into the C.I.O. by the backdoor are again becoming active. A notable example is Bob Winstead of Tullahassee, former Vice-President of the Okla.-STFU.

The Blackjack Local, under the able leadership of Ben Coleman and C.V. Grimmette, has scheduled a big meeting for H. L. Mitchell, National Secretary, on Thursday night.

The Haynes Local is to be complimented on the business-like manner in which it conducts its meetings. A. L. Bonnet is President and Joe Ponds, Secretary. Both are good S.T.F.U. men.

L. A. Perry of Summitt, reports progress in reorganizing his local, one of the oldest in the State. Brother Perry's members became discouraged when the top leadership of the STFU in Oklahoma failed them last year. This won't happen again, as real farmers are now running their own union.

Beland Local will hold an open meeting on May 3rd. Officers and members of Halls Chapel local are especially invited to attend.

NOTICE

A special page devoted to Oklahoma news is now being published as an addition to the regular STFU NEWS bulletin. Locals are urged to send in items each month to W. R. Purcells, State Secretary, Muskogee, Okla.

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MISSOURI

ISSUED BY NATIONAL OFFICE
BOX 5215, MEMPHIS, TENN.

W. M. TANNER APPOINTED

STATE ORGANIZER

W. M. Tanner has been assigned as the state organizer for Missouri. He is one of the best organizers in the Union, and during the Highway Demonstrations was the first organizer sent in by the STFU to aid the evicted people. Along with President Butler, he was escorted out of the state by the patrolmen when they broke up the highway encampments, but Brother Tanner returned that same night and stayed with the people when it was dangerous for an STFU organizer to be caught in Missouri. The Tanner family intends to move to Southeast Missouri soon. Brother Tanner is white, a minister of the Gospel, and is doing a real job for the STFU in Missouri.

STFU GETS FSA GRANTS

FOR ITS EVICTED MEMBERS

The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, which is held in respect by government officials and in fear by planters, has succeeded in securing relief grants for practically all of its loyal members in Missouri who were evicted from their homes in January. Dozens of cases have been handled by STFU officers and results obtained where union members followed directions in applying for grants and loans. Grants were small, it is true, but they supplied bread for evicted families. Some families taking part in the highway encampments had been led to believe that land and homes would be immediately given them by the government. It is too bad that they were disappointed. The STFU and its responsible officers have never promised to bring Santa Claus or get pie out of the sky.

DEERING MAN GETS LOAN EFFORTS OF STFU

Jim Horne of Deering Mo., a member of the STFU, entered a complaint with the Memphis office. On the 23rd day of February, he received a farm loan of \$240., in addition to one grant check received in January. This man's experience is repeated every day in Missouri and other states.

LA FORGE ORGANIZES

The tenant farmers, sharecroppers and daylaborers in and around the LaForge government project have organized the strongest local in Missouri, surpassing all of the old locals in membership. This local was organized by W.M. Tanner and J.F. Hynds while the Highway encampments were still on 61. Nine other locals have also been organized. Many of them are composed of white as well as Negro workers.

SWIFT LOCAL HOLDS MASS MEETING

A mass meeting, with President J. R. Butler speaking, will be held April 30, Sunday afternoon, at 2:00 p.m. Members of all Locals near Swift are invited to attend. The Swift Local with Jim Brantley, President, Dave Moore, Vice-President, and Herbert Swinger, Secretary, now has 54 members, all in good standing, and is one of the new locals in Missouri.

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A special page devoted to Missouri news is now being published as an addition to the regular STFU NEWS bulletin. Locals are urged to send in items each month of union news in their community.